



Nanotechnology and Human Health: Scientific Evidence and Risk Governance

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P-244**NANOTECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN HEALTH: SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE AND RISK GOVERNANCE****Authors:**

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Background and aims: Besides the promise of great benefits of nanotechnology, concerns exist on adverse health consequences. As complexity and uncertainty are large, evidence-based policy will be elusive, and models of risk governance are needed.

Methods: A critical assessment was conducted of key evidence on possible health implications of nanomaterials, with a view to identify options for risk governance and policy formulation.

Results: Current evidence is far from being conclusive. A cautionary approach in policy may be appropriate for several reasons: (i) humans have limited evolutionary experience of nanomaterials- a possible reason for the diminishing ability of cells to interact with particles at nanoscale level; (ii) nanoparticles can enter the body relatively easily, especially through inhalation and gastro-intestinal assimilation, and are very mobile once inside the body; (iii) several chemical-physical mechanisms resulting in cell damage have been reported; (iv) effects are often dependent on particle size, with a tendency to become more active as the particle size decreases; (v) population exposure to nanomaterials is not well known, but may be or become high, for example through cosmetics, food additives, or from airborne nanoparticles; (vi) potential adverse effects include a broad spectrum of adverse effects, specific and a-specific.

Conclusions: Assessing the risks of nanotechnology is challenging. One must take into account the unique complexities of the interaction with the human body. Innovative models and frameworks for risk assessment and risk governance are being developed and applied in order to inform policy.

Keywords: nanotechnology, nanoparticles, risk governance, health impact, emerging risks, uncertainty